

New Mexico Archbishop Michael Sheehan and I wrote to New York Mayor Bloomberg in January about the community's hopes to use steel from the World Trade Center to rebuild a bell tower for the Church. The Barelbas Community Development Center spearheaded this effort to revitalize the neighborhood with this landmark as the center of the community.

New York City has agreed to donate two 20-foot steel beams from the World Trade Center for a Bell Tower at the Sacred Heart Church. The beams will be incorporated into the design of the tower and memorialize victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Many people deserve a lot of credit for making this a reality. John Garcia and Sosimo Padilla thought they could make this happen, and they sought assistance from me and others. And they did it.

We saw the face of evil on September 11th. And in the aftermath, we saw the depth of America's goodness and a return to simple faith. New Mexico will rebuild this bell tower and remember. We are a strong, loving people and a faithful people. This bell tower will remind us and call us to worship for many years to come.

After the attacks on September 11, President Bush said that terrorism cannot dent the steel of American resolve. I agree. These beams, this parish, this community, represent the strength of our American character and all the best our Nation has to offer. I'm honored to be a part of this.

Today, a delegation of New Mexicans are in New York to accept the beams in a ceremony. Traveling to New York are John Garcia; the Rev. James Moore of the Sacred Heart Church; Sosimo Padilla, head of the church's bell committee; Sam Tinker, a local business owner who volunteered to transport the steel, and a representative from my staff, Dawn Petchell, who assisted in this request.

I also want to thank Southwest Airlines who donated airfare for the New Mexico delegation to go to New York, and to Bob Turner's Ford Country who donated a large flag to drape over the steel beams as they travel to the State. The Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce is planning a celebration to welcome the steel beams to New Mexico.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that our seniors are still without a workable prescription drug benefit program. Because of the rapid increase in the price of prescription drugs, and the costs related to medical care, the price of medicine is now out of reach of millions of seniors. Tragically, many of our seniors are now faced with a choice between food and prescription drugs.

I go home, and every weekend people continue to reach out and tell me they have a problem with buying their prescriptions. I had a lady come to me and say I have to buy the prescription for my husband, and I choose not to buy for myself. We continue to hear that day in and day out. It is shameful that we have not taken a position on this.

As Democrats, we support a prescription drug benefit plan that covers all seniors that is voluntary and universal. No senior would be faced with a prospect of not being able to afford medicine regardless of income. We understand back in the 1960s when we established Medicare that if Lyndon B. Johnson had known that prescriptions were needed at that time, and now we know that they are needed for care, they would have been included in the Medicare process.

We also know that the insurance companies, even back then, the reason why we have Medicare is because the insurance companies, as soon as the elderly were getting sick, they were being dumped. As soon as they were not making a profit on the senior citizens, they were being let go. We know now that the proposal that the Republicans have, and that is to try to provide an additional insurance to our seniors who have a fixed income who cannot afford additional insurance, who the insurance companies do not want because if they get sick, they are going to be dumped again, very similar to what the HMOs are doing now in those situations where they are not making a profit.

We looked at Medicare, and we know that we tried to bring down the cost and we established HMOs so that we would bring down the cost, but we know now that the HMO has actually cost us more than Medicare services. We need to stop playing around and respond to this serious issue before us, and that is meeting the needs of our seniors and the prescription drugs that they need.

We also recognize that those same prescriptions, and this is a crime, those same prescriptions are sold outside this country for cheaper prices, and our seniors who can least pay for them are the ones that are having to carry the burden. This is where the profits are being made from the pharmaceutical companies. It should be a crime for this to be occurring.

Mr. Speaker, we need to pass a meaningful prescription drug plan that uses Medicare to make drugs affordable and provide universal voluntary benefits for all seniors. Congress can vote to bail out Enron, and they can also vote to help the most wealthy of this country by providing them tax cuts, but we do not take care of our elderly, and that is shameful. While the Republican proposals claim to help seniors, it does not cover all seniors, and it provides no real guarantees for coverage.

The much more narrowly constructed House Republican plan would not reach many middle class Americans. Less than 6 percent would be covered. The reality is when you get sick and are in need, those private companies are not going to be there for us. They are not going to be there for our seniors. We need to make sure that Medicare provides this service. We need to make sure that we treat our seniors in an appropriate manner when they reach their twilight years.

Also, the Republican plan forces seniors to shop and buy a private insurance plan, making it a hassle for older Americans who will have to contend with insurance plans which come and go. As I have indicated, even the insurance companies are going to be trying to get those more healthy seniors out there so they can make a profit. We know most of our seniors, when they get ill, are going to need not 1, not 2, but some cases up to 8 to 10 prescriptions. Insurance companies are not going to want to cover those. The administration knows that, and we need to recognize that and be able to do the right thing when it comes to our seniors and treat them in a manner of dignity as we should.

In addition, the Republican plan does not address the rising cost of prescription drugs. We have talked about those costs. The pharmaceutical companies, it angers me because we know they are selling that same prescription in Canada and Europe for much less than what it is sold for to our seniors here. We ask and plead that we pass a prescription drug plan that benefits all.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 20 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

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#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 10 a.m.

#### PRAYER

Pastor Ken Wilde, Capital Christian Center, Meridian, Idaho, offered the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father:

Today we rise with humility and thankfulness before our Creator and ask for divine assistance from Heaven. We are of all people grateful for the bountiful blessings that You have bestowed upon our great land. As this body of legislators now begins its day of deliberations, we ask that You send to them a supernatural ability to discern heaven-sent solutions; that there would come such divine breakthroughs in areas of legislative logjams that we all would say with one voice, the Lord God Almighty, He has helped us.

We pray that You would extend Your hand of health, strength, endurance, and grace to each Representative and their family members. As these men and women help steward our Nation we ask, as Jesus Christ asked, Your kingdom come, Your will be done in their earthly endeavors today. Give us all now a vision and a hope and a faith to lead this Nation into the divine destiny that You have ordained that America